



JEFF LIPSCOMB tries to reassure his daughter Rachel as they survey their Ventura home destroyed by the Thomas fire. The 11-year-old girl, whose prized Harry Potter collection was destroyed, says the blaze has set her back. “I want to know who I am,” she says.

Photographs by MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Trauma lingers in Ventura

For many fire victims, the loss of daily routine is acutely felt

By THOMAS CURWEN

Two weeks after the Thomas fire, nearly everyone in Ventura has a story to tell. With more than 500 homes lost and 27,000 residents evacuated, no one is a stranger to this disaster.

They turn to one another in restaurants and diners, checkout lines and the post office and share their stories as if words could lay a foundation for their new lives.

Initially they asked, “Did you lose your home?” Now it’s, “How are you doing?” in an understanding that possessions matter less than concerns of the heart.

They reply with expressions of solace and are surprised at how banal words sound in the aftermath of such devastation. So they speak with gestures, bringing to ordinary



UNCERTAINTY LOOMS after the wildfire, which leveled more than 500 homes. “Our days have become unmoored,” a rabbi says.

interactions — turning left, queuing for coffee, greeting one another — a courtesy and patience that had gone missing from their lives.

The residents of Ventura know they are lucky. Their city did not become another Santa Rosa with its myriad tragedies, but then again, they also know that not everyone in Ventura is feeling especially lucky.

For the families who lost their homes, the slow accounting of their new lives has begun without the familiar landmarks. Trajectories changed, priorities upended, they toggle between past and present, caught between old habits of reference and the world they now inhabit.

They believed they would be safe. They never imagined a fire like this would darken these December blue skies.

[See Trauma, A8]

MARCH FONG EU, 1922 - 2017

Pioneering Asian American in California politics

By CLAUDIA LUTHER

March Fong Eu liked to tell constituents that she was “born behind a Chinese laundry,” and it wasn’t far from the truth.

Eu’s parents ran a hand-wash laundry in Oakdale, a modest town in the San Joaquin Valley where — at the time — a girl of Chinese descent might well have thought twice about dreaming too big.

But Eu climbed the rungs of education, plowed through the high brush of politics and became the first Chinese American to hold a constitutional office in California when she was elected secretary of state, the first woman to hold that office.

A potent symbol of womanhood and persistence through her life, Eu died Thursday following surgery after falling at her home in Irvine, said Caren Lagomarsino, Eu’s longtime spokeswoman. She was 95.

[See Eu, A9]



Associated Press

A SYMBOL OF PERSISTENCE

California Secretary of State March Fong Eu and First Lady Betty Ford check delegate totals in 1976.



GINA FERRAZZI Los Angeles Times

GROCERY STORE clerk Hector Esparza hands over ground cornmeal for tamales to customers at Amapola market Thanksgiving week in Downey.

After a tamale fiasco, store seeks redemption

Famed Downey grocer hopes to restore trust of shoppers whose Christmas ’16 meals were ruined

By RUBEN VIVES

The tamale disaster unfolded with impeccably bad timing.

The week before Christmas last year, people had stood in line for hours for the store’s famous masa, the ground cornmeal for tamales.

Soon after the holiday, hundreds of angry customers laid siege to the Amapola Deli and Market in Downey, demanding refunds after their tamales were ruined by funky masa.

Some people tried to save Christmas by serving spaghetti and nachos — a combination that any family of Mexican de-

scent will tell you would definitely not save Christmas.

Amapola had itself a public relations nightmare.

So, the question this year is: How do you recover from a tamale apocalypse?

If you’re the owners of Amapola, you get a new corn supplier and launch a public relations campaign. You measure success by how many customers come back. And you wait for the Super Bowl of tamales — Christmas — to return.

“Usually you have to do something major to break into the 5 o’clock news,” said Carlos Galván Jr., vice president of Amapola. “We led off the local channels.”

[See Tamales, A10]

Man held in alleged terror plot

Ex-Marine planned to use guns, explosives to attack San Francisco tourist site, FBI says.

By RONG-GONG LIN II AND RUBAINA AZHAR

SAN FRANCISCO — Several months ago, the FBI became interested in the Facebook account of Everitt Aaron Jameson, a 26-year-old Modesto tow truck driver and former Marine.

Acting on tips from an informant, authorities said they saw that Jameson “liked” and “loved” pro-Islamic State and pro-terrorism Facebook posts. In the coming weeks, the FBI alleged, Jameson would plot a Christmas suicide terror attack on San Francisco’s Pier 39, a popular tourist destination.

“He had been there before and knew that it was a heavily crowded area,” an FBI affidavit filed Friday said. “Jameson explained that he also desired to use explosives, and described a plan in which explosives could ‘tunnel’ or ‘funnel’ people into a location where Jameson could inflict casualties.”

Authorities announced terrorism charges against Jameson on Friday. His alleged plot comes as Islamic State has called for attacks on Western cities around the [See Pier 39, A6]

2018 holds risks for GOP

Republicans end year with legislative wins in Congress, but they may pay a steep price.

By LISA MASCARO

WASHINGTON — After a year of legislative fits and starts, the Republican-led Congress can claim victory on an agenda of tax cuts, judicial confirmations and a substantial regulatory rollback.

It’s a list of accomplishments that seemed to surprise even party leaders, who warily entered a political marriage of necessity with President Trump, but now say they have made their peace with his unpredictable style of governing.

“I’m warming up to the tweets, actually,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Friday after the president showered Congress with Twitter praise. “This has been a year of extraordinary accomplishment, by any objective standard.”

The successes, however, have come at a steep political price. Polls show voters unenthusiastic about the tax overhaul — the GOP’s signature accomplishment [See Congress, A7]

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 70/49. **B6**

